

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LIMA 07444 171451Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 7444

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PE

SUBJECT: AUGUST 16 STRIKE THREAT -- MINE UNION LEADERS ARRESTED

SUMMARY. THE FAR-LEFT MINE WORKERS UNION CLAIMS THAT KEY UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. UNION HAD THREATENED INDEFINITE NATIONWIDE STRIKE IN THE MINES AUGUST 16. GOP ACTED TO HEAD-OFF LABOR UNREST THROUGH PROMULGATION OF DECREE PROHIBITING STRIKES AND WORK SLOW-DOWNS. THE LABOR MINISTRY IS AUTHORIZED TO SUMMARILY RESCIND CONTRACTS OF THOSE WORKERS IMPLICATED IN WORK STOPPAGES OR LABOR-CAUSED PRODUCTION CUT-BACKS. GOP PRESSURE HAS APPARENTLY CAUSED THREATENED AUG. 16 STRIKE TO FAIL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FAR-LEFT NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MINE AND METALWORKERS (TNTMMP) CLAIMS THAT THE GOP ARRESTED TOP UNION LEADERS OVER THE WEEKEND. THE FNTMMP HAD THREATENED A NATIONWIDE MINERS STRIKE BEGINNING AUGUST 16 AND CENTERED ON THE STATE-OWNED CENTROMIN (FORMERLY CERRO DE PASCO) MINING COMPLEX. ACCORDING TO THE UNION, INCLUDED AMONG THE DETAINEES ARE THE SEC GEN AND OTHER LEADERS FROM THE CENTROMIN UNION FEDERATION AND THE SEC GEN OF THE FNTMMP CENTRAL REGIONAL FEDERATION. THE GOP HAS NEITHER CONFIRMED NOR DENIED THE ARREST OF UNION LEADERS.

2. THE THREATENED AUGUST 16 STRIKE APPARENTLY HAS FAILED. WORK IS PROCEEDING NORMALLY AT ALL SOUTHERN PERU COPPER CORPORATION INSTALLATIONS WHERE UNION IS AFFILIATED TO THE FNTMMP. CENTROMIN IS ALSO SAID TO BE WORKING AUGUST 16. THE GOP IN THE PAST WEEK
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LIMA 07444 171451Z

HAD STEPPED UP ITS WARNINGS THAT A STRIKE COULD NOT BE TOLERATED.

IN ADDITION TO ALLEGED ARRESTS, THE GOP ISSUED AN AUGUST 14 DECREE REITERATING THE PROHIBITION ON STRIKES DURING THE PRESENT STATE OF EMERGENCY AND SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES. THE DECREE AMPLIFIED THIS STRIKE PROHIBITION TO INCLUDE A PROHIBITION OF ANY "DECREASE IN PRODUCTION ATTRIBUTABLE TO WORKER CONDUCT" (I.E. SLOWDOWN). THE LABOR MINISTRY IS AUTHORIZED TO CHECK THE FACTS OF A CASE AND AUTOMATICALLY RESCIND CONTRACTS OF THOSE WORKERS IMPLICATED EITHER IN STRIKE ACTION OR PRODUCTION SLOWDOWN. UNION LEADERS ON PAID LEAVE MAY ALSO BE FIRED FOR PARTICIPATION IN AN ILLEGAL WORK STOPPAGE. FINALLY, THE DECREE NOTED THAT WHEN THE NATIONAL STATE OF EMERGENCY EXPIRES WORK STOPPAGES WILL THEN BE SUBJECT TO (NEW) LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES.

3. THE GOP, AT LEAST PARTIALLY CONVINCED THAT IT WAS POLITICIZED MINE UNION LEADERS AND NOT THE RANK AND FILE WHO WERE PRESSING FOR A STRIKE, ALLOWED CERTAIN UNION ASSEMBLES (BANNED DURING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY) TO TAKE PLACE. A CENTROMIN ASSEMBLY (MINUS UNION LEADERS ALLEGEDLY DETAINED BY THE GOP) DECIDED TO POSTPONE STRIKE ACTION UNTIL AUGUST 23. MEANWHILE, THE LABOR MINISTRY HANDED DOWN A RESOLUTION TERMINATING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AT CENTROMIN WITH A DECLARATION THAT THE NEW CONTRACT WILL PROVIDE FOR THE MAXIMUM 70 SOLES PER DAY WAGE INCREASE SET FORTH IN THE FEBRUARY 1976 DECREE LIMITING SALARY INCREASES.

4. COMMENT. GOP PRESSURE TACTICS MAY SUFFICE TO SQUELCH FAR-LEFT UNION EFFORTS TO LAUNCH A STRIKE IN THE MINES. RESOLUTE GOP ACTION SHOULD CAUSE THE AUGUST 23 STRIKE DEADLINE TO SLIP STILL FURTHER. MAJOR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS OFFERED ALMOST NO SUPPORT TO THE MINE UNIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A PURPORTED FAINT-HEARTED CGTP BLESSING FOR A ONE-DAY SYMBOLIC STRIKE.

5. BEYOND THE SITUATION IN THE MINES, THE GOP IN ITS AUGUST 14 DECREE DECLARES A TOUGH LABOR POLICY WITH PROVISION FOR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL OF UNION LEADERS AND WORKERS INVOLVED IN STRIKES OR WORK SLOWDOWNS. THE DECREE IMPLIES THAT STRIKE RESTRICTIONS WILL CONTINUE AFTER THE STATE OF EMERGENCY ENDS. A PROHIBITION ON "POLITICAL" OR SOLIDARITY STRIKES IS LIKELY AS IS SWIFT ADMINISTRATIVE DETERMINATION OF CASES INVOLVING LABOR CONFLICTS

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PAGE 03 LIMA 07444 171451Z

AND JOB SECURITY. ADVERSE UNION REACTION WILL BE LIMITED BY GOP HARASSMENT OF UNION LEADERS THROUGH PERIODIC ARRESTS AND DETENTION. SMITH

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